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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 005317

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SUBJECT: KUWAIT MEDIA REACTION, NOVEMBER 15-19: TIMETABLE FOR IRAQI
SOVEREIGNTY; DEMOCRACY; TERRORISM; WOMEN'S RIGHTS

[11](#). SUMMARY: Reaction to the timetable for transfer of
sovereignty in Iraq has been limited to one editorial that
ties the decision to the upcoming US presidential elections.

Commentary on democratization in the region reflects a lack
of faith in regional governments to carry out reforms, but
also criticism of the US for supporting these "dictatorial
regimes." A prominent liberal commentator criticizes US
support of Kuwait, stating that "if America believes that
Kuwait is a model for democracy then it is lying and this
signifies that it still supports tyrannical regimes." One
writer states that democratic reforms are an "obligation" of
GCC governments in order to fight the rise in terrorism. A
conservative Islamist opines that the US exports a
"democracy of homosexuals and pornography."

Arabic daily al-Seyassah reported on November 18 that 200
female students in a Kuwaiti school were expelled for not
wearing a headscarf. Several MPs strongly denounced the
expulsions. The daily reports Ministry of Education sources
as saying that "only 12 students" were expelled, and that
they are looking into the issue.

Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad announced this week
that a bill on women's rights would be introduced to the
National Assembly. A prominent Islamist MP stated that he
was not against women's suffrage, but drew the line on women
in public office. END SUMMARY.

[12](#). News stories: On November 15, Al-Rai Al-Aam reports that
Prime Minister Sabah Al-Ahmad stated: "women's political
rights will be reintroduced again to the National Assembly."
On November 16, "a parliamentary source" stated that the
National Assembly will grant women political rights in 2003,
according to Al-Anba. Al-Anba also reports that Islamist MP
Waleed Al-Tabtabaie said he was not against granting women
the right to vote, but rather against granting them the
right to run for office.

Al-Qabas reports on its November 16 front page that the
Economic Committee of the Council of Ministers (Cabinet) is
discussing proposals on a new taxation law, quoting an
"informed source" as saying: "Kuwaitis should realize that
the taxes are coming."

The Ministry of Interior has formed a committee to study the
causes of the recent resignation of 250 senior officials and
other workers at the Ministry, according to Al-Anba.

According to an "Iraqi security source," 400,000 cars have
been exported from Kuwait to Iraq since the fall of Saddam's
regime, Al-Anba reports.

Editorials:

[13](#). "Behind the American Decision"
Dr. Yasser Al-Saleh wrote in independent Al-Rai Al-Aam
(11/18): "President Bush announced the transfer of
sovereignty to the Iraqi people could be achieved prior to
writing a new Iraqi constitution. The real reason for Bush's
decision to expedite the transfer of authority to the Iraqis
is his fear of losing the upcoming presidential elections in
2004."

[14](#). "America is Coming For Those Who Do Not Practice
Democracy"
Liberal Dr. Ahmad Al-Baghdadi wrote in independent Al-
Seyassah (11/15): "It is a tragedy for America to
financially and militarily assist [some repressive Arab]
regimes and then also attempt to reinstate the dignity of
the people, which these regimes have violated. The President
must realize that Islamic groups are the main reason for the
political tyranny in the Arab and Islamic worlds, and that
as long as they are destroying our social, political and
intellectual balance, then any call for reforms will

useless."

15. "Human Rights Violations"

Liberal Director of the Center for Strategic and Future Studies at Kuwait University, Dr. Shamlan Al-Essa wrote in independent Al-Seyassah (11/15): "A human rights report recently published in Washington states that most of the victims of human rights violations in Kuwait are from South East Asian countries. This nothing new since local and international human rights organizations have repeatedly criticized Kuwait for violating human rights. I believe that external pressure on Kuwait may be the solution to this problem since Arab leaderships are not used to listening to their own people."

15. "The Enemies of Democracy"

Liberal Dr. Ahmad Al-Baghdadi wrote in independent Al-Seyassah (11/19): "How can any democracy develop without intellectual freedom? If American believes that Kuwait is a model for democracy then it is lying and this signifies that American still supports tyrannical regimes. America should read the new press and publication law to realize the amount of intellectual terrorism present in Kuwaiti law. If the US is serious about implementing democracy in the Middle East, then it must not support regimes with fake constitutions or parliaments."

16. "Democracy or Terrorism"

Liberal Director of the Center for Strategic and Future Studies at Kuwait University, Dr. Shamlan Al-Essa wrote in independent Al-Seyassah (11/17): "Due to increased violence and terrorism in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, it is no longer acceptable to delay political and economic reforms. The GCC countries have not yet realized that adopting democracy is no longer an option, but rather an obligation."

17. "When Will We Be Prepared?"

Dr. Abdullah Al-Hamadi wrote in independent Al-Rai Al-Aam (11/19): "Muslim extremist are responsible for giving the bad impression that Islam rejects democracy. The ultimate goal of democracy is to allow Arabs and Muslims to live a decent life in which justice and freedom prevails. The Iraqi people have a golden opportunity to form a true democratic government, unlike most of the democracies in the Arab world."

18. "This is Our Mother America"

Conservative Islamist Mohammad Al-Mulaifi wrote in independent Al-Seyassah (11/16): "Two articles were published in the newspapers last week: one celebrated the opening of a school for homosexuals in New York, and the another described the election of the first homosexual bishop in the Anglican Church. this is the kind of democracy which our mother American is attempting to spread to Iraq and Afghanistan-the democracy of homosexuals and pornography."

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